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ABSTRACT

This paper attends to the critical, problematic and massively pervasive question of moving from precise and defensible statements of theoretical validity to equally precise and defensible statements of practical viability. Specifically, the paper presents certain experiences of sociologists engaged in bringing to bear tested propositions of youth development (or, in a more restrictive sense, juvenile delinquency) on the routine institutional practices of schools, courts, police, social services and families. The primary focus is on deliberate and theoretically-guided social change, and the practical and social conditions of its occurrence. (Author)

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DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PLANNING CAPACITY FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

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The project reported in this paper is being completed under the auspices of the Office of Youth Development, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

This paper attends to the critical, problematic and massively pervasive question of moving from precise and defensible statements of theoretical validity to equally precise and defensible statements of practical viability. Specifically, the paper presents certain experiences of sociologists engaged in bringing to bear tested propositions of youth development (or, in a more restrictive sense, juvenile delinquency) on the routine institutional practices of schools, courts, police, social services and families. Our topic then, is deliberate and theoretically-guided social change, and the practical and social conditions of its occurrence.

BACKGROUND IN THE PROCESS OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

Take it for the moment and for the purposes at hand that the validity of the following propositions has been empirically established:

1. Youth having systematic access to socially desirable and acceptable roles in institutional contexts of family, education, and employment will be less likely to engage in delinquent acts than youth who are systematically denied access to those roles.
2. Youth who are systematically negatively labelled in the family, in school, at work, in the neighborhood and among peers are more likely to engage in delinquent acts than youth who are positively labelled in those same settings.
3. Youth having high access to desirable social roles and experiencing positive labelling in critical institutional contexts are more likely to become integrated with and morally committed to existing social institutions and to develop conforming roles; youth having little or no access to desirable social roles and experiencing negative labelling in critical institutional contexts are more likely to become alienated

from existing social institutions and to develop deviant roles.

These propositions, clearly drawn from a variety of sociological and social-psychological perspectives on deviance, were adopted by the Office of Youth Development as the core of a Strategy for Youth Development guiding the activities of Youth Services System Projects in approximately 100 communities. Implicit in the propositions was the claim that making a difference in the level of delinquent involvement in a community would necessitate making changes in these structural features of social institutions which controlled access to roles and labeling processes, specifically in statutes, regulations, policies and practices which could be identified and whose consequences could be determined. The outcome of these programs, then, was to be changed in those features of the social setting which contributed to delinquency, insofar as these were accessible to planned social change efforts. In this sense, this three-year effort constituted a major shift from a psychological change or individual treatment perspective to a social change perspective in federal youth programming, and a shift from the salience of psychological variables to sociological variables in program planning and evaluation.

Over a three year experimental period, the following qualititative and quantitative data were collected in the search for empirical support:

1. Qualitative plans and reports submitted on a quarterly basis by Youth Services System projects, outlining objectives directed toward institutional change consistent with the strategy.
2. Quantitative measures of change in perceived access to roles, negative labelling and alienation among clients of diverse treatment programs. These data were generally collected

on N's less than 50, using a variety of quasi-experimental pre-post designs and a variety of control groups, and were subjected to a residual gain analysis (Elliott and Blanchard, 1975).

3. Quantitative measures of levels of perceived access to roles, negative labelling and alienation in a representative sample of community youth (N's = 1,000) to serve as a baseline measure for program planning and evaluation and to provide data for theory-testing purposes. These data were subjected to a variety of predictive and interaction-seeking techniques (Brennan and Huizinga, 1975).
4. Quantitative measures of existing relationships among youth-serving organizations responsible for effective youth development in the community. Measures were derived from Eugene Litwak's (1970) multi-factor theory of interorganizational linkages.
5. Quantitative data descriptive of the existing service resources in a community. A combination of open-ended and close-ended categorical items were used, but no statistical tests were performed.
6. Quantitative measures of flow through and penetration into the juvenile justice system. Five years'data were requested for the construction of a baseline of transition probabilities against which to measure the impact of social change objectives directed at the justice system.
7. Quantitative measures of the social, economic and political characteristics of the community. Census data were used as the basis of a social ecology or social area analysis which relied upon a combination of factor analysis, cluster analysis

and discriminant function analysis to delineate socialogical boundaries of a community (Brennan, 1973; Brennan and Huizinga, 1975).

During the three year period from 1973-1975 in which Youth Service System Projects were conceived, funded, implemented and studied, the bulk of attention and energy (by sociologists at any rate) was devoted to the satisfaction of professional standards of theoretical validity. The issue of theoretical validity was by no means idle, given the propensity of persons to make policy out of hypotheses, tested or not. The demand for a viable youth development delinquency prevention policy at the federal level governed the priorities of initial research efforts undertaken in cooperation with local youth service system projects. The identification of salient setting variables and of critical conditions of intra-and inter-organizational relationships, and the systematic exploration of their bearing of processes of planned social change have been undertaken less formally and for the most part, less rigorously.

The theoretical grounds may be said to have been sufficiently established to warrant employing them systematically as guides to practical action. The cumulative research of three years can be and has been marshalled to make a case to local decision-makers: <u>if</u> a difference could be made in the structure of educational and work opportunities and roles in the community, and <u>if</u> changes could be negotiated in these policies and practices which systematically produce negative labelling of young people, a change could be registered in the rate at which delinquent <u>acts</u> are committed in a community.

Under what conditions could such differences be made? How do tested theoretical propositions come to constitute criteria governing policy and program decisions? As increasing numbers of sociologists

have found their way into working relationships with units of local, state or federal government, the theoretical and methodological resources of sociological inquiry have been turned with increasing frequency and rigor to the issues surrounding the practical viability of theoretically powerful findings.

Recent legislative developments serve as an index of increasing federal interest in the support of social services planning and evaluation functions at state and local levels (general Revenue Sharing, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, Social Service Amendments to the Social Security Act--Title XX, the Housing and Community Development Act, and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act of 1975). A variety of federally funded programs bear the stamp of the recent capacity building for planning policy, which is characterized in part by an interest in and demand for empirical demonstrations of planned, systematic and propositionally guided social change.

In the area of youth development, currently developing partnerships in Iowa among state government, the state university and local communities for the purposes of guiding short-term strategies and long-term intentions may serve as an illustrative example of the sorts of issues which are encountered, the histories which develop, and the documentation which is required in the work of moving from theoretical confidence to practical, strategic confidence.

STATE AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

Community based youth programs have developed throughout the country. Youth services systems, youth service bureaus, runaway shelters and so on have been popular approaches in dealing with delinquents and status offenders. A large proportion of these programs

have had to end operation or are struggling to remain in operation. The problem is that many of these youth programs had not been identified by the citizens as truly their program. These projects, established through federal or state seed monies were viewed as "outside programs," i.e., the "feds" program or the government's programs. Realizing this predicament, federal funding agencies are attempting to switch from a program to a planning philosophy.

To facilitate rational planning in youth development and delinquency prevention programming the Community Youth Program Project was established in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. This project is supported through state funds provided by the State Office for Planning and Programming and federal funds provided by the State Crime Commission.

The Community Youth Program Project provides technical assistance to state agencies and communities of Iowa for the purpose of enhancing their capacity to conduct effective planning, program design and implementation, and feedback evaluation relative to youth development and delinquency prevention. Such technical assistance focuses on designing and implementing a state-wide survey that assesses the needs of youth and the design and implementation of a procedure for planning and programming community-based youth development and prevention programs. The major benefits that will result from the project will be to provide: 1) a sound empirical data base for the state's comprehensive juvenile justice plan; 2) assistance to the state in developing its capacity to rationally dispense funds and provide technical assistance, training, and research and evaluation resources to local communities; and 3) a capacity-building youth program model for communities. A major objective of this project is to develop, at the state and local levels, rational and empirically based program planning and development.

Youth Development Capacity: Definition of Desirable Outcomes

Definitions of capacity building in youth development should be tied to the intended benefit to youth. The National Strategy for Youth Development defines that benefit. The Strategy's central concern is with the conditions necessary for beneficial youth development. Youth are more likely to develop satisfactorily when community institutions provide them with access to desirable social roles, when community institutions are organized to avoid the premature and inappropriate negative labelling of youth, and when, as a consequence, youth have a stake in--strong bonds with--the community.

The central point of the Strategy is that youth development is an attribute and outcome of the manner of operation of the community's institutions. Improvements in youth development require analysis and modification in those institutions, in youth programs, and in the use of youth resources.

This institutional perspective does not, however, ignore youth problems which may occur even under favorable youth development conditions. The necessity of providing remedial assistance to correct these problems is recognized. Compared with other approaches to youth development, the Strategy places a higher priority on desirable institutional change, and recognizes the necessity for remedial services as a necessary suppliment to-but no replacement for-institutional change.

Youth development capacity increases in terms of outcomes. This leads logically to a question concerning how that capacity can be increased; an operational definition dealing with the means is needed.

Youth Development Capacity: Operational Definition

The Community Youth Program Project concentrates on the implementation of planning and evaluation instruments, and is limited to a comparatively short period of time (twelve months). Two additional considerations

are taken into account. First, effective use of the findings from the instruments has implications broader than the planning and evaluation techniques alone, and second, the growth of youth development capacity through a process of change has implications beyond the time of the project.

By definition capacity building is not a matter of adding financial resources to a given community. This project is being conducted with no allocations of money to state or local agencies, forcing recognition of a prominent fact: compared to the amount of resources already available and being employed in communities for youth development, even sizable supplemental allocations would be small by comparison. It would not be reasonable to expect supplement allocations to produce any substantial gains in youth development, especially if those allocations are employed in a fashion similar to the use of existing resources.

The clear implication is that an increase in the youth development capacity at the state and local levels depends on the way in which youth development at these levels are organized, and on the way in which available resources are used. Increases in youth development capacity come from reorganization of youth development, including institutional change, and from increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of available resources. Those are the purposes of Community Planning and Feedback Instruments used in this project.

The Community Planning and Feedback Instruments are designed to provide information--rooted in the Strategy's perspective--which will support improved decision-making about the use of resources, and which will guide the planning and implementation of necessary institutional change involving structural reorganization and the reallocation of resources (copies of these instruments can be obtained

by contacting either author). An information capability--assessment and evaluation capability-- is a crucial component of any effort to increase the youth development capacity of a community. A central task of the project is to help in the implementation of those instruments.

However, simply gathering data does not assure that it will be used, or that any desirable changes will take place. A second task of the project must be to help identify or create conditions under which the instruments will be applied appropriately, and under which effective use of the findings will be made.

Further, the goal of capacity building is not a one-shot effort to improve the lot of youth during the time of the project. After the project time, the project may cease to exist, but the state's and community's task of beneficial youth development will continue. The state and local sites should be left with a permanently enhanced capacity for continuing to address this task more effectively in years to come.

A third task of the project, therefore, is to use the time available to help the state and communities build a base, a capability which will continue to produce increases in youth development capacity, which will follow through on what is begun.

An operational definition of youth development capacity should include the following elements.

<u>An Orientation to the Needs of All Youth</u>. Without addressing the conditions and needs and problems of all youth, it is impossible to get an accurate picture of the nature and magnitude of youth development problems, of appropriate priorities, or of the needed capacity of programs. The Needs Assessment Instrument employs a sampling design in order to assess the needs of all youth in a community,

for these very reasons. While initiatives undertaken as a consequence of the Needs Assessment are likely to focus on particular problems and needs of particular youth sub-populations, the comprehensive data base permits selection of target populations and problems in a rational manner with proper attention to magnitudes and priorities.

Capacity to Apply the National Strategy. The Community Planning and Feedback Instruments are based on the elements of the National Strategy for Youth Development, so that the data collected may be an appropriate guide to the institutional changes which the Strategy states will be necessary to improve youth development. However, neither the instruments to be used, nor any other instruments, produce findings so clear and unequivocal as to provide the programmatic equivalent of "insert Tab A in slot A". For the state and communities to make effective use of the information produced by the instruments, the decisionmakers and youth program professionals must understand the strategy, so that they will comprehend the nature and implications of the findings. Further, these persons will not be able to implement vigorously the approach suggested by the Strategy unless they agree with and support its analysis and perspective.

Political/Policy Capacity. Since the approach being used leads to re-organization, institutional change, re-programming, and re-allocation of resources, there is a political component to capacity building. The term "political" is used here in its simple, rather than pejorative, sense: decisions will be made about "who gets what, where, and how". If the state and communities are to increase youth development capacity using the National Strategy approach, they must develop the political capability to adopt policy, set goals and priorities, and make allocations. These are not simple administrative matters, but involve the values, perspectives and desires of the various sections of the community. Necessarily, influential persons

at high levels in government, the private sector, and youth-serving organizations are involved. In addition, planning must take account of potential sources of resistance to change. Ignoring these can block the initiatives which make long-range change impossible.

Technical Capacity. The process of change will not be complete in a short period of time. The process of change and improvement is a continuing operation, and substantial benefits may be two or three years in coming. It is necessary to create the technical ability to sustain a continuing cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation, which employs past experience to improve youth development conditions. The Community Planning and Feedback Instruments are the keystone of this capability in the hands of a local technical staff which can provide continuity to the effort.

Coordinative Capacity. In any community, youth development is not a single, monolithic entity, but involves a multitude of agencies, organizations, and institutions. Few, if any, significant youth development problems or needs can be addressed within any single organization. The ability to produce concerted action among the various organizations is crucial.

Combined with a willingness and intent on the part of influential sectors of state and local agencies to attain greater coordination, the National Strategy system development facilitates the coherent youth development efforts which are needed.

Roles of the Community Youth Program Staff. It has been stated that "youth development capacity" is defined as the ability (1) to provide youth access to desirable social roles, (2) to limit and reduce premature and inappropriate negative labelling, (3) to limit and reduce youth alienation from the community, and (4) to provide assistance to correct youth problems and meet youth needs which now arise and which are likely to arise even under very favorable youth

development conditions. Further, it has been operationally related that "capacity building" means to help state and local jurisdictions to create or strengthen their capacities (1) to examine the needs and problems of all youth, (2) to apply the National Strategy, (3) to provide political leadership to the capacity-building effort, (4) to assess needs, plan, implement, and evaluate in a continuing cycle over the long run, and (5) to produce the coordination among youth-serving organizations necessary to mount coherent youth development efforts. The Community Planning and Feedback Instruments are seen as a critical part of the capabilities defined.

The project staff's role focuses on the Strategy and the technical capacity. Political considerations are "local knowledge". While the project staff helps to specify what the political processes need to accomplish, state and local persons carry the main responsibilities in this arena. The project staff's function is to help the state and communities to understand and apply the Strategy, and to build the technical capability which will allow these jurisdictions to orient themselves to the needs of all youth, to address those needs through a rational cycle of assessment, planning and evaluation, and to achieve the necessary coordination.

In addition to providing capacity-building assistance, the project staff makes use of the project time experience to refine and expand the technology for capacity building. The project work provides opportunities to assess the utility of the instruments, to correct problems in their implementation, and to expand the capacity building knowledge base. This requires that the project staff not only help in the implementation of the instruments, but that the staff also document and assess the capacity-building efforts in each site, employing a comparative analysis, and produce usable guidance for future efforts.

Goals for the Community Youth Program Project

* To increase the youth development capacity (as defined operationally) of the state and 3 communities and to make the techniques employed available on an ad hoc basis to other sites requesting assistance in the capacity-building process.
* To document and assess the capacity-building process in a manner which will allow transfer and subsequent use of the experience.
* To refine and expand the capacity-building technology.

Objectives of the Community Youth Program Project

The 3 objectives of the project, and the steps taken to fulfill these objectives are presented below:

Objective 1. A state-wide assessment of youth needs. In order to obtain base-line data to be used for the state planning purposes two research instruments are being administered on a state-wide basis--1) the Youth Needs Assessment Questionnaire and 2) the Youth Serving Agency Needs Assessment Questionnaire.

Step 1. Selection of a state-wide sample of schools (composed of a random stratified urban-rural junior and senior high schools sample).

Step 2. Obtain consent to administer questionnaires within selected schools.

Step 3. Select random sample of students within selected schools.

Step 4. Train those who will be administering the questionnaires.

Step 5. Administer the Youth Needs Assessment Questionnaires to the school samples.

Step 6. Analyze the data.

Step 7. Develop the Youth Serving Agency Needs Assessment Questionnaire.

Step 8. Select the state-wide sample of juvenile justice and youth serving agencies who will receive the questionnaire.

Step 9. Mail out the questionnaires to the selected agencies.

Step 10. Analyze the data.

Objective 2. The community capacity building in youth development and delinquency prevention project. A main purpose of this project is to establish a method for developing and implementing a community-based program. This method requires advance planning, continuous testing and ongoing improvement. This makes it a planned experimental method.

Presently, three Iowa communities are engaged in the capacity building process (each is at different stages of the process). Several communities have contacted the Project Director for purposes of exploring the feasibility of conducting the program in their localities. Each of the project sites have a Mayor's Commission on Youth (a layman-professional advisory group). The Project Director was contacted by these Commissions, and in turn approached each community by presenting to the Commissions the theory of youth development and the National Strategy, the planning process, and the capacity building instruments. After the presentations the Commissions decided to engage in the program under the supervision of the Project Director. A time schedule was then developed for data gathering in each city. School administrators were then contacted to negotiate the pupil survey of youth needs. The youth commissions are the response-planning components of the project. That is, the findings of the Community Planning and Feedback Instruments are presented to them. The planning and implementation of institutional change and youth services programming are carried out by the Commissions. The project staff assists in analyzing data, interpretating data, and consults on community action and programming. It is emphasized that

the major planning and program implementation is accomplished by the Commissions.

Step 1. Selection and consent of the communities that will engage in the capacity building process.

Step 2. Obtain government sponsorship and agreement to implement the Community Planning and Feedback Instruments.

Step 3. Assist community leaders and influentials in understanding the National Strategy and to adopt its propositions as primary criteria for youth development.

Step 4. Train interviewers and implement the Community Planning and Feedback Instruments.

Step 5. Analyze the data.

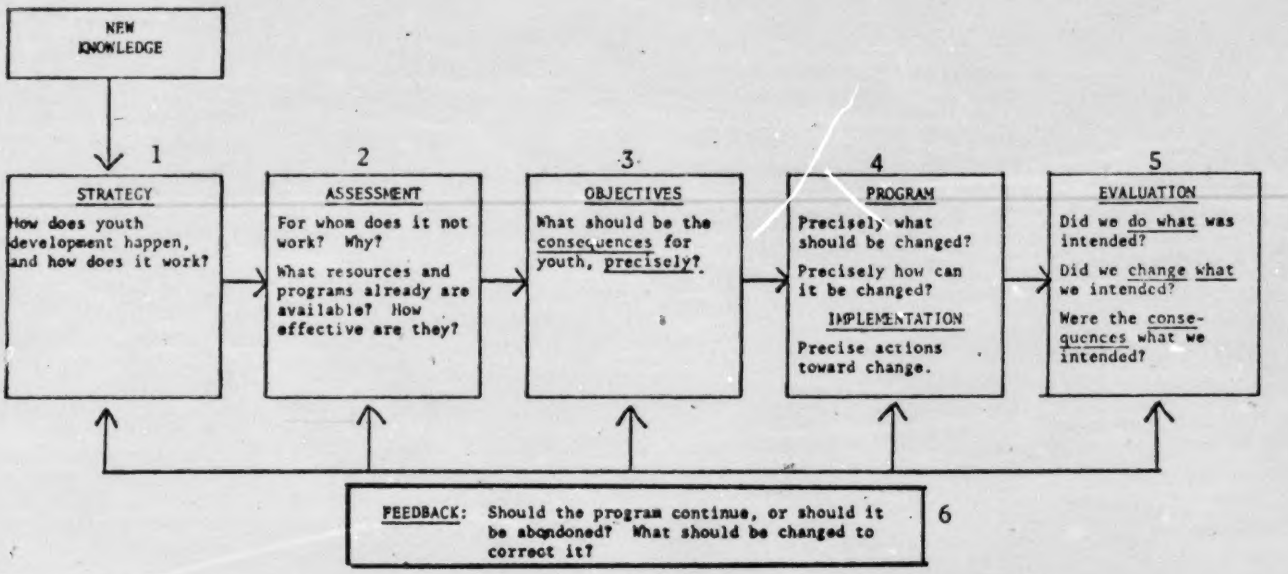
Step 6. Present and interpret data findings to the community (meetings with mayor, city council, juvenile justice personnel, school personnel, citizen groups, youth groups, parent groups, etc.).

Step 7. Help to form, at policy levels among key community sectors, relationships which will facilitate the adoption of appropriate policy, the allocation and re-allocation of resources, and the implementation of plans.

Step 8. Help to form, train, and establish in operation a continuing technical support staff, which, on an ongoing basis, can execute the technical parts of needs assessment, planning, institutional change, program development, and evaluation, consonant with the National Strategy.

Step 9. For those situations in which the analysis of findings from the instruments suggests that immediate and short-term action can be taken, to help to plan and implement those actions (for example, direct services coordination, diversion, revision of suspension-expulsion procedures, relocation of service programs).

Step 10. Help to interpret the findings from the instruments and prepare a two to three-year plan for youth development capacity building, institutional change, resources allocation, program development, and evaluation, by which means the capacity building effort can continue. The community capacity building procedure can be diagrammed as follows:


NEW KNOWLEDGE
1
STRATEGY
How does youth development happen, and how does it work?
2
ASSESSMENT
For whom does it not work? Why?
What resources and programs already are available? How effective are they?
3
OBJECTIVES
What should be the consequences for youth, precisely?
4
PROGRAM
Precisely what should be changed?
Precisely how can it be changed?
IMPLEMENTATION
Precise actions toward change.
5
EVALUATION
Did we do what was intended?
Did we change what we intended?
Were the consequences what we intended?
FEEDBACK: Should the program continue, or should it be abandoned? What should be changed to correct it?
6

Objective 3. Assist in the formulation of the Iowa Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. This will be accomplished through presenting and interpreting the findings of the state-wide youth needs assessment survey and the community capacity building project to the Iowa Crime Commission, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, the State Youth Coordinator, and other state agencies. A conceptual framework for the juvenile justice plan will be formulated.

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